

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the potential environmental consequences resulting from a proposed force structure change at Shaw Air Force Base (AFB), South Carolina. This EA analyzes impacts from the proposed realignment of two squadrons and the deactivation of a single squadron to provide a total of 72 Primary Mission Aircraft. Overall, this realignment results in six fewer aircraft, a slight reduction in training operations and approximately 300 fewer personnel.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS PROCESS

This EA has been prepared by the United States Air Force (Air Force), Air Combat Command (ACC) and the 20th Fighter Wing (20 FW) in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA, and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 32-7061 (*The Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, 32 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 989).

## PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of this action is to realign units at Shaw AFB to provide more capability to the Air Force's Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) Construct. The EAF construct grew out of the need for the United States to deploy forces worldwide despite the reduction in overseas basing and personnel. The proposed action would allow the most flexible weapons systems to continue in operational service with the cost saving benefits associated with common equipment and support personnel.

## PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

This EA analyzes the proposed action, Alternative A and the No-Action Alternative:

**Proposed Action:** Under the proposed action, two squadrons would each receive six additional new F-16 Block 50 aircraft. A third squadron would maintain its current inventory of 24 F-16 Block 50 aircraft. The fourth squadron would be deactivated and 18 F-16 Block 50 aircraft would be transferred from Shaw AFB. This action adds 12 newer F-16 Block 50 aircraft to the 20<sup>th</sup> FW and removes 18 F-16s for an overall change of six fewer aircraft. No facility construction or modification would be required as a result of this force structure change. The annual use of ordnance under the proposed action represents a reduction from current use. The proposed force structure change would involve a change in manpower requirements resulting in an overall decrease of approximately 300 personnel at Shaw AFB.

**Alternative A:** Alternative A would be similar to the proposed action with respect to realignment of the squadrons, manpower requirements, and munitions use. However, it involves redistribution of the existing aircraft from the deactivated squadron rather than adding

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newly manufactured F-16 Block 50 aircraft. Twelve of the 18 aircraft from the deactivated squadron would be assigned to the other 18 PMAI squadrons with the remaining six aircraft transferred from Shaw AFB.

*No-Action Alternative:* The No-Action Alternative would result in no force structure realignment or deactivation.

## **SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

This EA provides an analysis of the potential environmental consequences associated with the force structure change. As indicated in the EA Chapter 4.0, the force structure change would not result in significant impacts to any environmental resource area and would not require permits from any regulatory agency.

The proposed action or alternatives would have no effect on airspace management, safety, noise or air quality, since there would be six fewer aircraft assigned to Shaw AFB and a resulting decrease in aviation activities. Furthermore, the engines of the aircraft currently assigned are the same as those used by any new aircraft. Annual ordnance use would also decrease.

The proposed action or alternatives would not require change to any land use at Shaw AFB since no new construction or facility modification would occur on Shaw AFB. The reduction in personnel associated with the proposed action or Alternative A would result in an estimated 5 percent reduced number of vehicle trips on and off base. However, this should not appreciably alter vehicular circulation on base or within the vicinity of the installation. Although numerous sensitive land use areas occur under the military training airspace, management practices for these areas would not be altered due to the slight reduction in aircraft overflights and noise.

There would be no ground disturbance or new construction at Shaw AFB associated with the proposed action or Alternative A; therefore, there would be no significant impacts to biological or cultural resources on the installation. Due to the decrease in aircraft operations, it is unlikely that the proposed action or Alternative A would have an effect on protected species underlying the military airspace. Cultural resources impacts are not expected because of the overall decrease in projected airspace use from current levels.

Socioeconomic resources would experience a somewhat adverse but not significant impact since, under either the proposed action or Alternative A, there would be a reduction in approximately 300 personnel at Shaw AFB and a decrease of approximately 70 secondary employment jobs in the region as a result of reduced off-base expenditures. The employment decrease of 0.8 percent of total regional employment would not be considered significant. The overall housing vacancy rate could increase, but this would not be expected to have significant impact on the housing market due to the region's long-term experience with a changing military population. Neither the proposed action nor Alternative A results in disproportionate adverse effects on minority persons, low-income populations, or children.